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News Releases

U.S. Department of Agriculture • Office of Information

USDA PROPOSES REVISING REGULATIONS FOR IMPORTED FLUE-CURED AND BURLEY TOBACCO

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced proposed regulations raising the user fees charged importers for inspection and pesticide-testing of imported flue-cured and burley tobacco.

J. Patrick Boyle, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said all imported flue-cured and burley tobacco affirmed by importers to be free of prohibited pesticide residues is currently charged 0.1 cents per pound for USDA's verification. The proposal would raise the fee to 0.35 cents per pound and establish a minimum fee of \$162 per shipment for sampling and testing.

Tobacco not affirmed by importers to be free of prohibited pesticides is currently charged an additional fee of 0.3 cents per pound to cover the more extensive testing needed to establish the status of the tobacco as regards pesticides. The proposal would raise this fee to 0.35 cents.

"The Food Security Act of 1985 requires USDA to revise its fees to reflect changing costs in its inspection and testing services for imported tobacco," Boyle said. "Based on USDA's experience gained since September 1986, when the inspection program for these types of tobacco began, the proposed new fees reflect actual costs of providing the service," he said.

Notice of the proposed rules will appear in the Feb. 3 Federal Register. Copies are available from the Director, Tobacco Division, Room 502 Annex Building, AMS, USDA, P.O. Box 96456, Washington, D.C. 20090-6456; telephone (202) 447-2567. Comments on the proposed rules may be sent to this address, postmarked by March 6.

Clarence Steinberg (202) 447-6179

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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET PRICE FOR UPLAND COTTON

WASHINGTON, Feb. 2—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today announced the prevailing world market price, adjusted to U.S. quality and location (adjusted world price), for Strict Low Middling (SLM) 1-1/16 inch (micronaire 3.5-4.9) upland cotton (base quality) and the coarse count adjustment in effect from 12:01 a.m. Friday, Feb. 3, through midnight Thursday, Feb. 9.

Since the adjusted world price (AWP) is less than the 1987-crop and 1988-crop base quality loan rates of 52.25 and 51.80 cents per pound, respectively, the loan repayment rate for 1987-crop and 1988-crop upland cotton during this period is equal to the AWP adjusted for the specific quality and location.

Because the loan repayment rate for 1988-crop upland cotton in effect during this period is less than the established loan rate, loan deficiency payments will be made to eligible producers who agree to forgo loan eligibility on their 1988-crop upland cotton. The loan deficiency payment rate for cotton which the producer agrees not to pledge as loan collateral during this period will equal the difference between the loan rate and the loan repayment rate in effect for that period.

The AWP will continue to be used to determine the value of upland cotton obtained in exchange for commodity certificates.

Beginning with the AWP announced today, in determining the adjustment to average U.S. spot market location, if the difference between the average price quotations for the U.S. Memphis territory and the California/Arizona territory as quoted for Middling (M) 1-3/32 inch cotton C.I.F. northern Europe and the average price of M 1-3/32 inch (micronaire 3.5 through 4.9) cotton as quoted each Thursday in the designated U.S. spot markets for any week is:

(1) More than 115 percent of the estimated actual cost associated with transporting U.S. cotton to northern Europe, then 115 percent of the actual cost shall be substituted for that week.

(2) Less than 85 percent of the estimated actual cost associated with transporting U.S. cotton to northern Europe, then 85 percent of the actual cost shall be substituted for that week.

The weekly differences between the average price quotations for the U.S. Memphis territory and the California/Arizona territory as quoted for M 1-3/32 inch cotton C.I.F. northern Europe and the average price of M

1-3/32 inch (micronaire 3.5 through 4.9) cotton as quoted each Thursday in the designated U.S. spot markets for the previous 51 weeks have also been altered, as necessary, to conform to the above procedure.

Based on data for the week ending Feb. 2, the AWP for upland cotton and the coarse count adjustment are determined as follows:

Adjusted World Price	
Northern Europe Price	64.47
Adjustments:	
Average U.S. spot market location	11.97
SLM 1-1/16 inch cotton	2.00
Average U.S. location	0.42
Sum of Adjustments	<u>-14.39</u>
ADJUSTED WORLD PRICE	50.08 cents/lb.
Coarse Count Adjustment	
Northern Europe Price	64.47
Northern Europe Coarse Count Price	<u>-59.23</u>
	5.24
Adjustment to SLM 1-inch cotton	<u>-4.15</u>
COARSE COUNT ADJUSTMENT	1.09 cents/lb.

The next AWP and coarse count adjustment announcement will be made on Feb. 9. Details concerning the revised procedure for determining the adjustment to average U.S. spot market location will appear in the Federal Register soon.

Diane O'Connor (202) 447-4026

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SCS CONSERVATION PLANNING FOR FARM BILL PASSES 65% OF GOAL

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6—More than 65 percent of highly erodible U.S. cropland now has a conservation plan as required by the 1985 Farm Bill, according to Wilson Scaling, chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Soil Conservation Service.

Conservation plans have been completed for 89.2 million acres of the more than 140 million acres of highly erodible cropland that have been determined to need plans so far.

“We met our goal of having conservation plans on 65 percent of highly erodible land by Jan. 1,” Scaling said. “Our next goal is to have all of the plans completed by the end of 1989. Our job is to help farmers significantly reduce erosion on their cropland and stay in business.”

Scaling urged farmers not to postpone their requests for conservation plans. “I urge farmers to act now if they have highly erodible acreage. If they postpone requesting a conservation plan until the last minute, they may face a long wait for the technical help to develop it.”

To stay eligible for USDA programs, farmers and ranchers with highly erodible cropland must have a conservation plan approved by their conservation district by Dec. 31. They have until Dec. 31, 1994, to implement the plan. To date, conservation plans have been implemented on 25.2 million acres, 18 percent of the affected land.

The following table summarizes state-by-state amounts of highly erodible land (HEL) determinations completed, percentage of land which has conservation plans completed and the percentage of land which has plans implemented.

	TOTAL HIGHLY ERODIBLE LAND (HEL)*	HEL ACREAGE DETER— MINATIONS COMPLETED*	HEL PLANS COM- PLETED	HEL PLANS IMPLE- MENTED
	<i>(acres)</i>	<i>- - - (% of Total HEL acres) - - -</i>		
Alabama	1,741,073	94	77	14
Alaska	49,584	100	94	32
Arizona	988,424	100	75	61
Arkansas	512,160	100	71	28
California	900,000	100	74	16
Colorado	9,150,000	94	71	22
Connecticut	13,496	100	75	6
Delaware	10,423	100	77	26
Florida	221,947	81	61	30
Georgia	1,083,784	100	69	30
Hawaii	62,926	100	93	5
Idaho	3,537,500	87	57	18
Illinois	4,900,000	93	66	10
Indiana	2,687,829	100	57	13
Iowa	12,102,300	93	65	13
Kansas	12,962,291	100	74	12
Kentucky	4,200,000	77	47	17
Louisiana	175,000	98	66	23
Maine	150,000	75	68	37
Maryland	299,777	100	83	9
Massachusetts	16,452	99	77	14
Michigan	626,000	89	67	19
Minnesota	2,100,000	100	59	30
Mississippi	1,610,043	96	53	23
Missouri	5,959,774	100	48	21
Montana	13,700,000	71	62	20
Nebraska	9,709,152	89	61	22
Nevada	105,548	94	74	58
New Hampshire	5,952	100	79	11
New Jersey	70,687	100	69	5
New Mexico	1,400,000	100	95	21
New York	1,020,000	90	65	21
North Carolina	1,202,400	93	65	7

North Dakota	6,705,384	76	56	7
Ohio	1,709,662	100	69	9
Oklahoma	4,712,495	100	62	14
Oregon	1,927,000	94	58	32
Pennsylvania	1,581,963	100	67	9
Puerto Rico	4,000	60	35	27
Rhode Island	236	100	66	33
South Carolina	417,360	81	56	25
South Dakota	3,949,384	100	66	14
Tennessee	2,513,100	84	60	9
Texas	15,586,182	75	60	19
Utah	564,000	93	74	60
Vermont	70,602	100	100	27
Virginia	987,567	100	69	8
Washington	3,500,000	100	63	17
West Virginia	66,293	100	87	14
Wisconsin	3,292,288	85	49	26
Wyoming	804,500	100	78	53
TOTAL	141,666,538	94	65	18

* Total HEL acreages are estimates. SCS is conducting H.E.L. acreage determinations in each state to ascertain final acreage on individual farms requiring conservation plans. The percentages listed in the table are the percentages of estimated total HEL acres.

Leslie Wilder (202) 447-3608

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DROUGHT TASK FORCE AND USDA CLOSELY MONITOR 1989 CROP PROSPECTS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6—A working group of the Interagency Drought Policy Task Force, which was established to monitor the 1988 drought, is meeting Feb. 7 to discuss progress in recovery from the drought conditions and look at potential crop prospects for 1989.

The working group consists of representatives of the Departments of Agriculture, Energy, Interior and Transportation, as well as the Office of Management and Budget.

USDA is monitoring the daily weather events for all major crop areas and analyzing the data for crop development and yield implications. “While the drought patterns, based on the long-term Palmer Drought Index, still show a large area of severe or moderate drought, precipitation expected between now and the end of April can further improve soil moisture levels and yield potential of wheat areas in the Great Plains,” said Norton D. Strommen, USDA’s chief meteorologist.

Timely spring and summer rain, in addition to favorable temperature patterns, will be the key to summer crop prospects. “There is little correlation between the negative Palmer Drought Index values we are seeing during the winter months and the prospective crop yields for this year,” Strommen said.

Through its state statistical reporting network, USDA also receives weekly field reports on crop status during the growing season. The current focus is on early monitoring of winter wheat conditions particularly for the Great Plains states where dryness, insect infestation and lack of snow cover has caused crop stress and potential for reduced yields. If dry conditions persist, more attention will be given to summer crop areas as the spring planting season approaches.

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USDA REPEATS WARNING AGAINST THE PURCHASE OF SMUGGLED BIRDS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 6—Buyers of exotic birds should make sure their purchases were not smuggled into the United States, the U.S. Department of Agriculture warns.

James W. Glosser, administrator for USDA’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, said every year from January through early spring, exotic birds by the hundreds enter the country illegally after the winter breeding season. The most popular birds are the hookbilled variety, such as the yellow-naped Amazon. Often they are sold by street vendors.

“These smuggled birds often carry diseases such as exotic Newcastle without showing symptoms,” said Glosser. “Since 1974, there has been an outbreak of this disease in pet birds every year, except one, although the disease has not infected commercial poultry flocks. The exotic

Newcastle virus is deadly to all birds and could be a major problem for the commercial poultry industry.”

Glosser said an epidemic in southern California of exotic Newcastle disease from 1971-1974 cost taxpayers \$56 million to eradicate. An estimated 12 million birds, mostly laying hens, were infected or exposed to the disease and destroyed. If exotic Newcastle became established in the United States it could cost the poultry industry some \$230 million a year and increase the cost of eggs and poultry to consumers.

“Pet dealers are putting their businesses at risk when they buy smuggled birds,” said Glosser. “Anyone who buys exotic birds in the United States should make certain they purchase them from legitimate sources and be sure the bird is wearing a circular stainless steel USDA-approved leg band. The band is engraved with three letters and three numbers.”

Glosser said there were at least six outbreaks of exotic Newcastle disease during 1988 in pet birds that were probably smuggled from Mexico or other nations in Central or South America.

“Many endangered species of birds are restricted from entering the country, but some can enter legally after complying with certain regulations,” said Glosser. “The birds must be declared to federal inspectors, accompanied by appropriate permits, and enter after a minimum 30-day quarantine at one of six USDA-operated facilities. APHIS tests the birds during the quarantine to make sure they are free of communicable diseases of poultry.”

According to Glosser, smuggled birds also may cause minor health problems to people who handle them. If birds are carrying the Newcastle virus, people who come in contact with them may develop eye inflammation. Birds with psitticosis, an infectious disease, can transmit mild flu-like symptoms to humans. The latter risk is somewhat higher for infants and the elderly.

Glosser said anyone planning to purchase a bird while abroad should learn about the strict rules governing its importation, especially the requirement for a 30-day quarantine. The public can obtain a free pamphlet by writing: “Pet Bird Pamphlet,” USDA-APHIS, Room G-110, Federal Building, Hyattsville, Md. 20782. Dealers and hobbyists may write the same address for a free fact sheet on how to avoid the purchase of smuggled birds.

Marlene Stinson (301) 436-7255

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USDA ANNOUNCES PREVAILING WORLD MARKET RICE PRICES

WASHINGTON, Feb. 7—Acting Under Secretary of Agriculture Richard W. Goldberg today announced the prevailing world market prices of milled rice, loan rate basis, as follows:

- long grain whole kernels, 9.97 cents per pound;
- medium grain whole kernels, 9.29 cents per pound;
- short grain whole kernels, 9.23 cents per pound;
- broken kernels, 4.98 cents per pound.

Minimum loan repayment rates for 1987 crop loans are the higher of the world price or 50 percent of the loan rate. For 1988 crop rice, the minimum repayment rates are the higher of the world price or 60 percent of the loan rate.

Based upon these prevailing world market prices for milled rice, rough rice world prices are estimated to be:

- long grain, \$6.16 per hundredweight;
- medium grain, \$5.82 per hundredweight;
- short grain, \$5.55 per hundredweight.

The prices announced are effective today at 3:00 P.M. EST. The next scheduled price announcement will be made Feb. 14 at 3:00 P.M. EST, although prices may be announced sooner if warranted.

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USDA AMENDS DAIRY PROMOTION AND RESEARCH ORDER

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9—The U.S. Department of Agriculture today announced an amendment to the National Dairy Promotion and Research Order, effective May 1, changing the composition of the 36-member board of dairy farmers which administers the order.

J. Patrick Boyle, administrator of USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service, said the amendment shifts a board seat to region 2 (Calif.) from region 5 (Minn., N.D., and S.D.). Initially proposed by the board, the shift reflects changes in milk production since the board was established five years ago, he said. The Dairy and Tobacco Adjustment Act of 1983, which authorizes the order, requires that the board reflect national milk production patterns.

Appointed by the secretary of agriculture from dairy industry nominees, the board administers a producer-funded annual budget of approximately \$79 million gained from assessments on milk as it moves from the farm. The board funds projects to improve the position of milk in the marketplace, with the projects submitted for review by the secretary of agriculture. AMS monitors the order.

The amendment was published as a final rule in today's Federal Register.

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WEIGHT GOES UP, BIRTHS DOWN FOR BRAHMAN CATTLE EATING SUMMER GRASS

WASHINGTON, Feb. 9—Brahman cattle apparently outperform their English cousins in gaining weight on summer fescue, a nutritious but fungus-infected grass, but pay a price in lower pregnancy rates, a U.S. Department of Agriculture animal scientist has reported.

Only 78 percent of Brahman heifers produced calves after grazing summer fescue, compared with 90 percent of Angus heifers eating the fescue. When the two breeds ate bermuda grass, their calving rates were more evenly matched at 92 percent for the Brahmans and 88 percent for the Angus.

The culprits are toxins in the fescue, according to Michael A. Brown of USDA's Agricultural Research Service and research leader of the South Central Family Farms Research Unit, Booneville, Ark. Toxins are produced in response to a fungus inside the fescue.

"There's a condition called 'summer slump' that's associated with this toxin," Brown said. "Summer slump is characterized by poor weight gains, rough hair coat, elevated body temperature and a generally scruffy-looking animal."

Despite summer slump, 40 Brahman heifers in grazing tests from April to October 1986 on summer fescue gained an average of 1.2 pounds per head per day, compared with an average daily gain of 0.7 pound per head for 40 Angus heifers on the fescue.

Brahman heifers grazing on bermuda grass gained an average of 1.4 pounds per head per day, compared with the Angus' 1.1 pounds per head per day.

Brown said the secret of the weight gains does not lie in any lack of sensitivity to the toxins by the Brahmans.

“Actually, Brahmans show more symptoms,” he said. “One element of the toxins restricts the blood supply to the animal’s extremities, such as feet and tail. This makes those body parts cooler.”

An infrared thermometer was used to measure the animals’ surface temperature above their hind foot on 10 dates from April 1987 to July 1988. On bermuda grass, the Brahman averaged 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit cooler than the Angus, but on fescue they averaged 6.1 degrees cooler.

“This does not mean that Brahman are inherently more sensitive to the toxins,” Brown said. “But they could be getting a higher dose of it through increased forage intake.”

Brown noted that while the Brahmans had lower overall pregnancy rates on summer fescue in 1987 tests, those that did become pregnant while grazing the fescue conceived quicker than the Angus.

On bermuda grass pasture, the Angus took an average of 26 days from the start of the breeding season before becoming pregnant, while the Brahmans required an average of 29 days. But on summer fescue the Brahman averaged 24 days compared with the Angus’ 37 days.

Sandy Miller Hays (301) 344-4089

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